

THE

FREEDMEN OF THE WAR:

A DISCOURSE

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The Freedmen of the War.

“He bringeth out those which are bound in chains.”

PSALM lxxviii. 6.

THE history of the world is marked by sudden changes and startling evolutions. It is not a dead uniformity—an unvarying expanse. We can not compare it to a vast prairie, where scarcely an undulation, and never a hill, breaks the view ; where the streams all flow with a sluggish and leaden current ; and where the same succession of low banks and monotonous plains for ever repeats itself. Much more does it resemble portions of our own Atlantic scenery, where the traveller sees rugged mountains, jagged rocks, and tumbling cascades, interspersed with glimpses of fair and smiling valleys, and is surprised at every step, by some new feature in the landscape.

Such is the aspect which the progress of our race presents. To a careless observer, surveying it through the dim haze of the ages, it may appear almost an unbroken level, with only here and there a salient point to arrest the eye. So when you look forth from some Alpine summit on a wide stretch of country over which the morning shadows are yet sleeping, its inequalities and roughnesses may be so toned down by distance and obscurity, as to render the prospect apparently tame. But, on a nearer inspection, the bold lines come out, and you discover lofty ranges, precipitous gorges, and rushing waterfalls, where before all seemed so smooth and placid.

In following back along the centuries the way of Divine Providence in the government of our world, we are often perplexed by its intricacy, often bewildered by its sinuosities, often confounded by its deviations from the course which we ignorantly judge to be the true one. We find that the ongoing of terrestrial events is not equable and regular, like the flow of a broad river rolling on in calm majesty, without a rift

in its current or a bend in its shores. Instead of this straight and even movement, we perceive in it all the diversified windings and alternations of the mountain brook; now leaping wild and free from its rocky birth-place; now pent up and stagnant in its confined bed; now creeping about among the hills, and losing itself in deep, shadowy glens; now hurrying through volcanic chasms; now spreading out into a clear, still lake; now roaring over rapids; now plunging down cataracts; yet ever pressing forward, swift or slow, through turmoil or repose, to its goal in the sea.

So is it with human history. It is full of abrupt turnings and unexpected vicissitudes. In fact, it would seem to be the design of God that the cause of man should go forward, not with a quiet and continuous progression, but by leaps and bounds—by forces brought to it at long intervals from great epochs—transition periods—when civilization and philanthropy enter upon new careers, and put forth their energies in new directions. Such an epoch was the Introduction of Christianity. It closed up

the old channels of thought, and opened a new path of progress for the world. Similar epochs were ushered in by the Invention of the Art of Printing, the Reformation from Popery, and the Discovery of America. Each of these events changed the course of human opinion, and inaugurated a new scene in the drama of the world's life.

Now, as these grand crises powerfully affect the destiny of our race, so they modify in an equal degree the duties and responsibilities of all who would shape that destiny for good and happiness. And hence the highest wisdom, in times of social disturbance and upheaval, is to know the lesson of the hour, and to do the work of the hour.

We stand to-day at one of those momentous turning-points in human affairs, which change the face of history, and send down their influence to the latest generations. Consciously or unconsciously, we are actors in a struggle out of which the Future is to be born. Without our knowledge, and contrary to our desire, Jehovah has made us His instruments in a

strange and terrible convulsion, through which it is clearly His purpose to prepare the way of righteousness and peace.

Long have the prayers of the pious and the humane been going up to the Eternal Throne, that this land might be purified from the guilt of Oppression; that it might be lifted out of the slough of wickedness into which Slavery had plunged it, to the high ground of fidelity to its own principles, and of justice to all; and that Freedom might grow and triumph, till not a chain should clank, nor a bondman cower, under the symbol of our nationality. We hoped, we believed, that hour would come. But we deemed the period of its coming to be far distant. And we looked for its dawning, not in thunder, and storm, and earthquake, but amid scenes of tranquillity—its golden beams flushing an azure heaven, and welcomed with the melody of songs, and voices of love and blessing. That day has come—sooner than we thought, and not in the way we thought. Its sun is above the horizon; but it rises on a sky red with blood, and lurid with the smoke and

flame of battle. The nation is in the throes of its second birth. In the hot furnace of civil war its purification is being accomplished. And out of the consuming fire, out of the strife and the agony, out of the carnage and the woe, up from the gory fields where our sons and brothers have fought and fallen, up from their graves, springs the glorious form of our new National Life, waving aloft the banner of Emancipation, and "proclaiming Liberty throughout the land, to all the inhabitants thereof."

In the pride of our vain wisdom, we marked out for ourselves the way to political greatness. Across the shaking morasses of Expediency, over the bottomless bog of Compromise, we formed the track, and laid the rails, and put on the train, and got up the steam, and with rush and roar were sweeping onward in our self-confidence, heedless of the abyss which Slavery had dug in our path, and whose yawning depths lay just before us. But God put his hand to the brakes, and switched us off on a new track, which He laid, and not man. There was surprise, terror, outcry, at first. There are doubts,

apprehensions, tremblings still. But the road is firm and straight, the engine sound, the cars stanch, the Conductor all-wise and all-powerful, and the end of our journey—a vindicated Government, a restored Union, a Free Nation—already in sight.

A period so eventful must be full of grave problems; and of these one of the gravest relates to the measures which should be adopted in behalf of those lately bound in chains, whom God, through the instrumentality of the war, is bringing out of bondage.

At the beginning of the fierce struggle that now convulses the land, the people of the North had but a dim perception of the stupendous issues which it involved, and no clear foresight of the consequences to which it would lead. They were animated by the single purpose of suppressing treason, upholding the Government and maintaining the integrity of the Republic. The overthrow of Slavery was not their direct object; for with whatever feelings of abhorrence they may have regarded the system, and however unquestioned may have

been their right to prohibit it in the Territories, they were precluded, by the compromises of the Constitution, from any forcible attempt to abolish it in the States where it had been established by law. But as the war went on and assumed unexpected proportions—as the conflict grew thicker and more deadly—as the rebellion developed its real strength, and its atrocious aim, it became more and more evident that we could conquer it only by destroying the institution in whose interest it had been commenced, and from which it drew its vitality and its chief support. Slowly and reluctantly we accepted this alternative. It required the protracted frown of an angry Providence, months of disaster and defeat, the sacrifice of countless millions of treasure, and of almost countless lives, to bring us to it. But we reached it at length. In obedience to the voice of the people, the President, recognizing military necessity as superior to all constitutional provisions, issued his proclamation, declaring for ever free the slaves of the conspirators who were seeking to overturn the Government.

This fact, the grandest in our history, infused a new element of power into the conduct of the war. It revived confidence. It gained for us the suffrage of the world. It allied us with Heaven. It enlisted in our cause the invincible might of Eternal Right and Justice. It arrested the almost unbroken tide of reverses that had carried mourning into myriad homes, and ushered in those subsequent successes and victories which have filled all loyal hearts with rejoicing, and cast over the rebellion the shadow of its approaching doom.

Since this potent word of deliverance was spoken, more than a million of slaves have obtained the blessed boon of freedom, partly by escaping within our lines from districts yet held by the rebels, and partly by the progress of our arms in restoring the authority of the Government over large portions of the revolted States. And these are but the advance-guard, the forerunners of millions more who will follow them out of the prison-house of bondage, as the victorious forces of the Union open the way, till Slavery and Secession—foul mother

and foul child—shall be driven for ever from our shores.

With what glowing interest and sympathy must we contemplate this multitude, thus led forth, by the hand of God himself, from life-long vassalage to liberty, and the possession of those personal rights which Heaven ordains as the inalienable heritage of all ! And as we behold them struggling up into the light of a better day—stamped with the brand of chattelhood ; scarred with the lash of the task-master ; all covered with the traces of the degradation and misery to which they have been subjected—how impressively must these questions present themselves to every thoughtful and benevolent mind ! What is their condition ? What are their most pressing needs ? What must be done to prepare them for the new circumstances in which they are placed ? In what way can their welfare be most effectually secured ? And what are the reasons which render this the great work of our time, and summon us to give to it our utmost zeal and energy ?

Of the million already freed, about one hun-

dred and thirty thousand are in the military service of the United States; eighty thousand as soldiers, organized into regiments and brigades, and so armed and drilled as to be highly efficient; and fifty thousand as army laborers, workmen on fortifications, wagoners, and hospital servants—thus releasing an equal number of white troops for active duty in the field. The remaining eight hundred and seventy thousand, though more or less dispersed over the whole territory recovered from the rebels, are chiefly to be found at Port Royal in the Department of the South; at Newbern in North Carolina; at Norfolk in Virginia; in the District of Columbia; on the Mississippi from Helena to Vicksburg; and in New Orleans. The peculiar circumstances attending the early days of their exodus exposed them to much suffering from the want of food, clothing, and shelter. But through the care of the Government, their own industry, and the prompt aid of societies and individuals, these necessities have been so far supplied, that the freedmen are now, for the most part, in a state of comparative physical

comfort. This statement, however, is not to be received as absolutely and universally true. Among the liberated bondmen, as among all other classes of our population, examples of indolence and unthrift may be found. Many, too, have recently escaped from slavery, and have not had time to redeem themselves from the rags and beggary which they brought with them. Such cases of distress, we are happy to say, are now chiefly confined to the region of the Mississippi. Owing to the unsettled and insecure state of that Department, and the consequent greater difficulty in organizing labor on the plantations, large numbers there are still in great destitution. But, leaving out of view these sad instances of suffering—instances exceptional in their character, and rapidly passing away—we recognize every where the broad and cheering fact, that the condition of the freed slaves as to employment and subsistence, is far more satisfactory than even the most sanguine could have ventured to predict. So well provided are they in these respects, that, as a general thing, they may be said no longer to

require our aid, or call for our solicitude. It is in reference to their intellectual and spiritual wants, that the most urgent appeal now comes to us.

In studying their needs under this aspect, it is important to bear in mind the fact, that hitherto they have been debarred from all means of education, and from all correct religious teaching. Despotism always endeavors to keep its victims in ignorance, in order that they may be more patient and submissive under its control. This has been its aim in all lands and ages. In whatever form it exists—whatever name it bears, whether that of hierarchy, monarchy, aristocracy, or oligarchy—it seeks ever to perpetuate its power by holding in darkness the minds it would subject to its will. The motive which induces the ruling classes of Great Britain to withhold free schools from her crushed and imbruted masses, is precisely the same as that which led the oligarchy of the South to prohibit the instruction of the slaves. The English aristocrat dreads the diffusion of knowledge among the common people, lest it

should diminish their subserviency to the privileged orders. His brother, the Southern oligarch, feared to permit his slave to be educated, knowing well that an educated slave would soon be a slave no longer. Hence in all the slave-holding States the most severe laws were enacted against teaching the slaves to read. Little better were the opportunities allowed them for religious instruction. They were, indeed, permitted to hear what their oppressors called the Gospel, dispensed by such lips as their oppressors chose. But it was the Gospel of the trafficker in human flesh—the Gospel of the child-seller and the woman-whipper—a Gospel which nullified marriage, denied their manhood, trampled on their God-given rights, and held forth obedience to their masters as the essence of all grace and virtue.

Coming out from such a condition, with the impress of generations of servitude and darkness upon them, is it surprising that they should be ignorant, superstitious, degraded; or that the most energetic endeavors should be demanded to fit them for the new position into which they have been so suddenly brought?

What else could we expect? To suppose that men, born and reared under the debasing influences of slavery, will become, by the mere act of emancipation, intelligent, self-reliant, and competent to their own welfare, is to hope for that of which the annals of civilization afford not a solitary example. There is needed for them—as once there was needed for every race that has emerged from barbarism—the guiding hand of a wise philanthropy, to lead them on to knowledge, independence, and happiness. This necessity the Government has felt strongly from the first, and has done all to meet it which the overwhelming burdens of the war have left it the ability to do. Numerous voluntary associations are also co-operating in the work with a liberality and an earnestness that are full of promise. The noble enterprise is begun; and it is only requisite that the Christian sentiment of the North should be deeply imbued with the feeling of its importance, and thoroughly roused to its prosecution, in order to put in action an array of agencies that shall pour the light of education and of a pure Gospel upon those

millions of immortal minds, which long years of chattelhood have benighted and brutalized.

A single glance at what is being done, even in this incipient stage of the movement, is enough to inspire us with confidence and joy. For the freedmen in the District of Columbia a village of neat, comfortable homes has been built on Arlington Heights, formerly the residence of the rebel General Lee. Who sees not the righteous retribution of Providence in the fact, that the princely estate of the man who has been the ablest champion of a rebellion undertaken for the perpetuation of slavery, should have been converted into an asylum for negroes whom the crushing of that rebellion has set free? What a striking instance of that poetic justice which, though often portrayed in fiction, is so seldom witnessed in real life! Into this village the freedmen have been gathered from the various camps around Washington; and there the problem of their social amelioration is in process of successful solution. The men are employed on work for the Government, and in cultivating the adjoining farms. They labor

regularly and earnestly. And although the season was far advanced before operations were begun, the experiment has already more than repaid the expense incurred. The charge of their mental and religious training has been assumed by the Tract Society at New York, under whose auspices a commodious building has been erected intended for the double purpose of a chapel and a school-house; and at its opening, a few months since, cabinet ministers, members of Congress, and high officers of the army, made congratulatory addresses. And well they might—for never did statesman or warrior utter words on a nobler theme or at a grander hour. In this house a day-school for children has been commenced, with hundreds of pupils; and also an evening school for adults, which is numerously attended. The capacity of the learners, their desire for improvement, and their proficiency, are eminently encouraging. In the formation of provident habits, in domestic economy, in moral culture, they manifest an equal progress. Indeed, the whole population is represented as evincing, in its industry, its

thrift, its sobriety, strong indications of soon becoming an intelligent, self-supporting, well-ordered community.

Similar accounts come to us from almost every point where any attempt has been made to succor and benefit the freedmen. In the neighborhood of Norfolk, large numbers of them have been placed on the plantation of that crack-brained traitor, Henry A. Wise, where they are now sustaining themselves by their own labor, and are being rapidly educated by the churches and schools which have been established among them. A short time ago in New Orleans, a lady, a native of the city—perhaps one of those whom General Butler converted—felt herself moved in spirit to open a school for colored children. The first day she had three pupils, and the third, three hundred. A movement was then begun to increase the number of schools, which has since been carried forward, partly by governmental and partly by individual patronage, until now there are ten schools, thirty teachers, and two thousand pupils under instruction. A prominent citizen of West

Virginia informs us, that when that portion of the Old Dominion became an independent State, there were in the city of his residence several thousand slaves who were then emancipated; and that since that period, they have built, chiefly with the avails of their own labor, comfortable dwellings for their families, erected two chapels and four school houses, and are now supporting their own pastors and teachers. In North Carolina there are twenty-three schools, forty-six teachers and three thousand pupils.

At Port Royal and the adjacent islands the experiment has been longer in operation, and the results are correspondingly more decisive. When this portion of South Carolina came under our control, the Secretary of War immediately instituted measures for the protection and welfare of the negroes who had been abandoned by their owners in their hasty flight from our victorious army. The population of the Sea Islands has always consisted almost entirely of colored people; and since their occupancy by our forces, this population has been largely increased by slaves who have fled thither

from all parts of the State, to find freedom and safety under the flag of the Union. Over these growing numbers the Government has exercised a watchful and paternal care. Superintendents have been assigned to the plantations, and the freedmen encouraged to work by the offer of suitable wages. And so fully has the effort succeeded, that the plantations are now in a good state of cultivation, and the laborers well supplied and contented. Many have even been able, from their surplus earnings, to purchase land of the Government, and are now working it on their own account; and instances have occurred of individuals realizing for their crop the past season two or three thousand dollars beyond what was needed for the support of themselves and families. Nearly the whole town of Beaufort has thus passed into the hands of freedmen who now hold as owners the mansions in which they once crouched and trembled as slaves. If we take into account the derangements which a change from compulsory to voluntary labor must at first inevitably create, the interruptions incident to military occupation,

and the shortness of the period during which the new order of things has existed, we cannot but acknowledge the cheering character of the results. One important step has at least been gained. It has been demonstrated that the negro will work, and work well, under the stimulus of compensation. He has got over the idea that freedom means immunity from labor. He has tasted the luxury of wages, and is eager to acquire property and a home which he can call his own. And when once this desire has been awakened, the ground has been won for higher influences, that will enter in and complete his elevation.

Accordingly we find that while this improvement has been going on in the industrial character of the freedmen, there has been a similar progress in their intellectual and religious development. Various philanthropic associations have sent out teachers and organized schools, which are filling those dark places with the light of intelligence and truth. In the Department of Port Royal, there are now about fifty schools, with fifty teachers, and

nearly four thousand regular attendants, besides a like number who are receiving occasional instruction. Little more than a year has passed since the educational arrangements were in such forwardness that these schools could begin their work. Then, not one among their pupils knew a single letter. Now, nearly all of them can read with ease almost any chapter in the Bible, and such plain pieces as are found in ordinary school books. They have acquired some knowledge of writing and arithmetic; can answer simple questions in geography; give the names and boundaries of the different States; and point out on a map the oceans, continents, and principal countries of the globe. Their memories are quick and susceptible, and they learn as readily, and give as much evidence of capacity for intellectual attainment, as children of any race whatever. They are docile and affectionate, fond of going to school, and delighted at being free. And, as an expression of these feelings, they take great pleasure in the singing exercises of the schools, and love to roll out with the full strength of their voices,

“My Country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of Liberty,
Of thee, I sing ;”

or those beautiful lines of Whittier, written expressly for the school on the Island of St. Helena :

“The very oaks are greener clad,
The waters brighter smile,
Oh, never shone a day so glad
On sweet St. Helen's isle.

For none in all the world before
Were ever glad as we ;
We're free on Carolina's shore,
We're all at home, and free.”

Let any one visit the plantations where these freedmen live ; let him note the evidences of increased comfort which gladden their homes ; let him mark the newborn dignity, the look of recovered manhood, with which they ply their voluntary toil ; let him go into their schools, and watch those dark minds brightening and expanding under the beams of knowledge ; let him listen as they sing the songs of Freedom ;

let him enter their crowded places of worship; let him contemplate their churches with thousands of members, which fresh accessions are constantly augmenting—let him ponder all this, and he cannot but be convinced that a social and moral transformation is here going forward, mightier than human sagacity ever contrived or human statesmanship ever wrought; and that never since the light of the Gospel first broke on the hill-sides of Judea, has the earth presented a spectacle so fraught with sublime and inspiring auguries.

Such is the field which now invites our culture, and such are the bright signs of promise which it everywhere displays. There is room here for all; and the Providence of God summons all to enter in and reap. The whole Christian strength of the North could not suffice to gather a harvest so wide and so ripe. To the Baptist Churches, however, the appeal addresses itself with peculiar significance and emphasis. The pious among the freedmen are largely of our denomination. At Port Royal they are almost exclusively so. And everywhere through-

out the South, vast multitudes of the colored people profess our faith, or harmonize with us in sentiment. They naturally look to us for their religious teaching. We can most readily gain their confidence and sympathy. Hence it is clear that on us the care of their educational and spiritual interests pre-eminently devolves. If we neglect the trust, God will transfer it to more faithful hands; but this will not alter the fact that to us the work appropriately belongs. Others may help us; and most gladly do we welcome their co-operation. Yet let us never forget that ours is the chief and foremost place in this godlike undertaking.

What, then, as Baptists, are we called to do in this matter? The first and most urgent demand that meets us—a demand that cannot be neglected a single day without incalculable injury to the cause of Christ—is to supply these broad wastes with missionaries and pastors, at least in sufficient numbers to occupy the central points, superintend the churches that still exist, gather new ones, and direct the general work of evangelization. We cannot longer defer this

duty on the plea that the South is inaccessible to our efforts. The brazen wall which Slavery had built around it has been beaten down by our victorious cannon. Already wide regions invite our occupancy; and the whole land will be open to us sooner than we shall be prepared to go up and possess it. In those parts of the rebel territory, which the advance of our armies has brought back under the control of the Union, there are many vacant houses of worship once belonging to our denomination, and many desolate altars on which the fire still feebly burns amid the ashes of devastation and the deluge of war. These the national authorities have placed in our hands, with the guaranty of military protection, and the promise of similar facilities in all the revolted States, whenever they shall have been reclaimed to their allegiance. Thus does the providence of God summon us to the mighty task of reconstructing, on a Christian basis, the religious institutions of the South. In place of a Gospel so corrupted by false views of human rights, so distorted by the selfish greed of the oppressor, as to stand forth an

abomination to heaven and earth, we must plant there the Gospel which He taught who came to save the poor and to lift up the fallen—a Gospel which proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. And as an evidence of the pressing necessity that we should engage in this work at once and with the utmost vigor, and as an incentive to our zeal, it will be sufficient to cite the history of our operations in the Sea Islands. Here was the beginning of our labors for the spiritual welfare of the freedmen, and here they have been most thoroughly and earnestly prosecuted. And what is their actual amount? How large is the supply which we have sent to this our earliest and most favored field? On these Islands there are sixteen thousand liberated bondmen, all needing our aid, all placed within the reach of our Christian sympathies. In this population there are three Baptist Churches, comprising an aggregate of thirty-three hundred members. The church at Beaufort, under the charge of Dr. Peck, contains, with its five

branches, fifteen hundred members; that on St. Helena Island nine hundred; and that at Mitchelville, near Hilton Head, a similar number. In these churches thirteen hundred and fifty have been baptized during the two years since missionary work commenced among them. And yet at this important point, so peculiarly our own, and so rich in promise, there are only three ordained Baptist ministers, two white, and one colored. Of the former, one is there merely for the purpose of regaining his health, and will soon return to his home in the North, if he has not already done so; and the other, Dr. Peck, worn down with exhausting toil, and unsupported, is also expected ere long to leave the field. So that, unless reinforcements are speedily sent, there will be only one colored preacher of our denomination for sixteen thousand souls. And if such is the destitution in the spot where we have done most, how great must it be throughout the vast regions in which we have done nothing! O, how thrilling, how importunate is the cry which comes to us from all parts of the recovered South

for men to break to these famishing multitudes the Bread of Life!

But the preaching of the Gospel does not comprehend our whole duty in relation to this momentous matter. These degraded and out-cast masses need to be educated for this world as well as for the next. Along with an adequate number of competent ministers, we must send out a host of teachers, qualified not only to take charge of the business of secular education, but also to assist in organizing and sustaining Sunday-schools, and in the various departments of Christian labor. This is a want which has been greatly felt. A large proportion of the teachers now on the ground, however competent to instruct in the week-day schools, have little fitness for the duties of the Sunday-school. Many of them are rationalists, deists, skeptics; and instead of seeking to instil into those clouded minds the knowledge of Christ and of His salvation, are laboring to infect them with the gospel of Theodore Parker and Wendell Phillips.

Here is our work; and this is precisely the

relation in which the Baptists of the North stand to the freedmen of the South. God has pointed us out as their guides in the upward course which he is opening before them. What Moses and Joshua were to the Tribes which Divine Power, with mighty signs and wonders, delivered from the thralldom of Egypt, we should be to the myriads whom the same Almighty hand, by manifestations not less startling, is bringing out of a more cruel bondage. On us rests the obligation to lead them into the Land of Promise—to train them for freedom on earth, and for immortality in heaven.

Let the vastness of the work rouse us. Here are a million of human beings, just risen from the black night of Slavery, now waiting to be enlightened, elevated, and prepared for the rights of manhood and the heritage of salvation. And behind them are three millions more, yet lingering in the prison-house, from whose limbs the fetters are breaking, and are destined to fall utterly away, when the design of God in this civil war shall have reached its triumphant fulfillment. And, following these, are six mil-

lions of white men, who, when the curse of bondage is removed, will rise up from their darkness and degradation, to claim the franchises of which a tyrannical oligarchy has robbed them, and ask for the blessings of education and of true religion. Where in all the ages is there a movement so stupendous as this? On what page of the world's annals can you find any thing so majestic as the moral uprising which will pervade the entire South, when once the rebellion has been suppressed, and its authors and leaders have fled to the sheltering arms of foreign despots; or, like Judas, their great prototype, have emigrated to their "own place!" Oh, what a day of redemption will that be for the South, when over her sunny fields now blasted by slavery, and ravaged by the fury and the despair of a merciless usurpation, free labor, free schools, a free press, and a free Gospel shall pour their living energies, renovating the whole land, and covering all its fertile plains and valleys with a thriving and peaceful population! This is to be the great social revolution of our day, and the

grandest of all the days. Whose heart is so dead as not to kindle at the thought of taking part in an enterprise so mighty in its scope, and so benign in its results?

There are some, perhaps, to whom the force of this appeal may be lessened by the imagination that an undertaking so immense, requiring such large expenditures of men and of means, must necessarily cripple our endeavors for the evangelization of the West, which they have been wont to regard as our sole, particular sphere. Even were this objection well founded—were it indeed true that we should be compelled by the inadequacy of our resources to neglect either the new West or the new South—I hesitate not to affirm that wisdom and benevolence would alike justify us in leaving the West for the present to take care of itself. The West is free. The West is strong. No burdens have weakened her gigantic youth; no chains have clogged her swelling muscles. She has at her command all the requisites and appliances of her own intellectual and moral progress. Her soil, from the surface

of the earth to its centre, is one huge treasure bed. Her plains are granaries, her hills mines, the sands of her rivers richer than those of old Pactolus. Her power of self-help is limited only by her inclination. By the munificence of His gifts God has made her the mistress of her own destiny. And the boundless energies which she has displayed in this hour of the nation's peril, show her sufficient for the trust, and equal to all the exigencies of her magnificent future.

But the trampled and crushed ones for whom I plead have hitherto had no agency in deciding their condition. No opportunity for better things has ever been theirs. Their darkness and their debasement have been forced upon them by circumstances beyond their control. Slavery, and not their own free choice, has made them what they are. And now as they come forth, in countless throngs, from the pollutions and the horrors of their involuntary bondage, and with outstretched arms implore us to succor them, must not humanity, and "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," prompt us to take them by the

hand, stanch their wounds, wipe away their blood, and raise them up, even though in doing so we should be obliged for a time to let go of others less exposed, or less helpless ?

There is, however, no necessity that in responding to this special call of God we should withdraw from other fields of labor on which He has led us to enter. If we faithfully use the resources which He has conferred upon us, we shall find that we have ample ability to do all that needs to be done for the freedmen and for the South, without setting aside the claims of any christian enterprise whatever. We have means enough and men enough to meet the sudden and large demands arising from the downfall of Slavery, and at the same time to plant the banner of Christ throughout the destitute West and the pagan East. Nevertheless, we cannot but recognize, in the magnitude of the cause we advocate to-day, in its momentous bearings on the public weal, in the solemn emphasis of its claims, in the fearful hazards which indifference to them involves, the clear handwriting of Heaven, marking it out as the para-

mount interest of the hour, and invoking us to comprehend and earnestly promote it.

The hopeful aspects of the work should inspire zeal and confidence. Let us not be kept back by the cry of slavemongers and their upholders, that the negro belongs to an inferior race, and is incapable of improvement. That he is at present low down in the social scale, may be admitted. It would be a miracle, if centuries of servitude and debasement had left him in any other condition. But he is no lower than God's chosen people were when He brought them out of Egypt—no lower than any portion of the human family would be, if subjected for the same length of time to the same deteriorating influences. We hesitate not to affirm that whatever of defect there may be in the character of the freedmen is to be ascribed, not to poverty of intellectual or moral endowment, but to the circumstances in which they have been placed. They have bent all their lives under burdens. Is it strange that they cannot at once stand erect? They have just come up from the foul dungeon of slavery, with the scent of its abomi-

nations yet clinging to them, and its deadly vapors still paralyzing every sense and every faculty. And shall we marvel that they do not walk forth with the strong step and uplifted brow of those who have always trodden the mountain-tops, breathing the free air, and basking in the glad sunshine? Notwithstanding the disadvantages which surround them—disadvantages springing alike from their past deprivations and from their present unsettled state—they nevertheless manifest qualities of mind and of heart, which prove their capacity for better things, and prophesy well of their future. Even through the deep gloom that overshadows them, flashes of a noble nature gleam forth, indicating that they need only opportunity and culture, to emerge from their depression, and take their place by the side of the more favored races.

When the policy of emancipation was inaugurated, its enemies, both at home and abroad, assailed it as inviting the slaves to insurrection, and as tending to produce among them wild disorder and outbursts of brutal ferocity. And

even its friends feared that a measure, for which so little preparation had been made, might leave its objects helpless through indolence, or lawless from sudden liberty. But the event has justified none of these predictions. The liberated bondmen have shown no unwillingness to labor wherever employment has been furnished them, and no disposition to avenge the insults and wrongs heaped upon them as well by loyal as by rebel hands. And those who yet remain in slavery are waiting for the deliverance which they know to be near, with a patience and forbearance actually sublime. That this calm endurance of injuries, this quiet demeanor under hope deferred, springs merely from constitutional timidity or from lack of spirit to assert their rights, no one can believe who has witnessed the manliness with which they bear themselves as soldiers. Their firmness and courage in many a bloody field have silenced forever the taunt that the negro is a coward. The glorious dead of Port Hudson, of Fort Wagner, and of Olustee, who fell bravely fighting for a country which gave them no citizenship, and which, even in

accepting them as its defenders, dishonored and robbed them, prove that dark skins may cover souls as heroic and patriotism as unselfish as the world has ever known. It is idle to deny that a race exhibiting such examples of magnanimity and valor, possesses elements of greatness which require only to be developed, to raise it to a high order of civilization.

Equally promising is the strong religious tendency so manifest in the negro character. Grant that his piety is often deeply tinged with superstition ; that it sometimes resembles more the wild Fetishism of his ancestral Africa than the soberness of the Gospel ; that it is a thing of emotion and excitement rather than of holy living ; and that even when apparently most ardent, it is not seldom dissevered from morality. These peculiarities are accidental—the fungus growth which the poison of Slavery has spread over his moral life. Nevertheless, the tendency is there, vital and potent in his nature ; and when purified and rightly directed, will become a powerful auxiliary in his uplifting.

These striking capabilities, displayed by the

colored population of the South under circumstances so adverse, viewed in connection with the wonderful unfoldings of Divine Providence in their behalf, are full of encouragement to those who would seek their welfare. Nor is it an extravagance to say, that nowhere on the face of the globe is there a department of Christian labor so rich in presages of success, or where the reapers may gather sheaves so abundant and so precious.

The elevation of this race is as important to ourselves as it is to them. Their home is upon our soil. Our destiny is bound up with theirs. Their numbers forbid their removal. And even were this possible, it would be a disaster, and not a blessing. The industry of Spain was ruined for a century by the expulsion of the Moors, and that of France by the banishment of the Huguenots. And the productive power of our own country would be crippled, if not destroyed, by the colonization of the negroes in other lands. While all sections would suffer from such an immense loss of labor, there are vast regions which would become a desert, were the

brawny arms that now till them withdrawn. They are here, and they are needed here. We cannot expatriate them if we would; and it were suicide to do it if we could. The only choice left us is, to allow them to remain in their degradation, a blot on the nation's fame, a gangrene in the body politic, a festering mass of ignorance and vice imperiling alike the present and the future; or to rouse ourselves, and put forth instant and vigorous efforts to fit them, by all the appliances of Christian truth and Christian education, for the new sphere into which God is so unexpectedly conducting them. Patriotism and humanity, the command of Christ, and the finger of Heaven, all beckon us forward to the work. Interest, duty, consistency, benevolence, unite to intensify the summons. We have prayed—we have battled—for the freedom of the slave. And now that God is suddenly breaking his chains, how tremendous will be our guilt, if by neglect we turn the blessing into a curse! What dishonor will such neglect bring to the cause of emancipation among all the struggling peoples of the earth!

What woes will it entail on the generations that are to come after us ! If we fold our hands in listless inaction while the day of decision is upon us, and events big with the fates of unborn ages are rushing on, how shall we answer it at the bar of conscience—at the bar of posterity—at the bar of the world.—at the bar of that Omniscient and Holy One, who will judge us for our not doing as for our misdoing ; and who has declared that “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin ?”

Followers of Jesus ! you see the path of duty and of labor to which your Master points you. Whatever you do must be done now, and done with your whole strength, or the succor will be too late and too feeble to avail its objects. They are afloat on the wild sea of uncertainty, and will perish if left to their own guidance. Helpers of the helpless ! hasten to their rescue. Let not the All-ruling Hand wave before you unheeded. Let not the blood of sons and brothers slain on the high places of the field be poured out in vain. By your country’s peril, by the woes of the down-trodden, by the pity

of Christ, so meet this solemn crisis, that the verdict of the ages shall bless you, and eternity confirm the award, "WELL DONE!"